

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original). A method for staged disclosure of a job request, the job request comprising a quota that indicates the number of responses to be received and a deadline for receipt of the responses, the method comprising:

determining a reputation rating for each of a plurality of service providers;

disclosing the job request to a group of service providers, wherein the reputation rating of each of the service providers in the group is higher than a threshold;

receiving a response to the job request from at least one service provider within the group;

prior to the deadline, comparing a number of responses received with the quota;

if the number of responses received is lower than the quota, disclosing the job request to service providers outside the group, wherein the disclosing is carried out in order of decreasing reputation rating.

2. (Original). The method of claim 1, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing the job request to service providers outside the group in order of decreasing reputation rating until either the number of responses received equals the quota or until the deadline is reached.

3. (Original). The method of claim 1, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing the job request to service providers outside the group in order of decreasing reputation rating until the number of responses received equals the quota.

4. (Original). The method of claim 1, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing the job request to service providers outside the group in order of decreasing reputation rating until the deadline is reached.

5. (Original). The method of claim 1, wherein the threshold is determined as a function of one or more factors comprising,
- the quota,
 - an amount of time between disclosing the job request to the group and the deadline,
 - a time of day and a day of week of disclosing the job request to the group,
 - a time of day and a day of week of the deadline,
 - a quantity of compensation to be paid to the service provider for each response received from the service provider, and
 - a quantity of service providers having each reputation rating.
6. (Original). The method of claim 1, wherein the job request relates to providing intellectual capital.
7. (Original). The method of claim 1, wherein the job request relates to providing marketing services.
8. (Original). The method of claim 1, wherein the disclosing steps are carried out using a computer network.
9. (Original). The method of claim 8, wherein said computer network is a public network.
10. (Original). The method of claim 8, wherein said computer network is a private network.
11. (Original). The method of claim 1, wherein the determining step is carried out using a quality assessment made by a client.
12. (Original). The method of claim 11, wherein the determining step comprises:
- assigning a numeric value for an occurrence of a reputation event.
13. (Original). The method of claim 12, wherein the reputation event comprises at least one of,

designating the service provider as a preferred provider by a client,
designating the service provider as an unacceptable provider by a client,
requesting the service provider to perform a particular job,
refusing to compensate the service provider for services performed, and
failing to perform a service after accepting a job.

14. (Original). The method of claim 1, wherein the determining step comprises:
assigning a numeric value for an occurrence of a reputation event.
15. (Original). The method of claim 14, wherein the reputation event comprises at least one of,
designating the service provider as a preferred provider by a client,
designating the service provider as an unacceptable provider by a client,
requesting the service provider to perform a particular job,
refusing to compensate the service provider for services performed, and
failing to perform a service after accepting a job.
16. (Original). A method for staged disclosure of a job request, the job request comprising a quota that indicates the number of responses to be received and a deadline for receipt of the responses, the method comprising:
determining a reputation rating for each of a plurality of service providers;
determining an acceptance probability rate as a function of service provider reputation rating, the acceptance probability rate indicating the likelihood that a service provider with a given reputation rating will provide a response to the job request;
selecting, based on the acceptance probability rate, a group of service providers of size sufficient to generate a number of responses equal to the quota by the deadline, wherein the group of service providers has the highest possible mean reputation rating;
disclosing the job request to the group;

receiving a response to the job request from at least one service provider within the group;

comparing a number of responses predicted by the acceptance probability rate with a number of responses received;

if the number of responses received is less than the number of responses predicted by the acceptance probability rate, disclosing the job request to service providers outside the group.

17. (Original). The method of claim 16, wherein the step of disclosing the job request to service providers outside the group is carried out in order of decreasing reputation rating.

18. (Original). The method of claim 17, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing the job request to service providers outside the group in order of decreasing reputation rating until either the number of responses received equals the quota or the deadline is reached.

19. (Original). The method of claim 17, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing the job request to service providers outside the group in order of decreasing reputation rating until the number of responses received equals the quota.

20. (Original). The method of claim 17, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing the job request to service providers outside the group in order of decreasing reputation rating until the deadline is reached.

21. (Original). The method of claim 16, wherein the job request relates to providing intellectual capital.

22. (Original). The method of claim 16, wherein the job request relates to providing marketing services.

23. (Original). The method of claim 16, wherein the disclosing steps are carried out using a computer network.

24. (Original). The method of claim 23, wherein the computer network is a public network.
25. (Original). The method of claim 23, wherein the computer network is a private network.
26. (Original). The method of claim 16, wherein the step of determining the reputation rating is carried out using a quality assessment made by a client.
27. (Original). The method of claim 26, wherein the step of determining the reputation rating comprises:
 assigning a numeric value for an occurrence of a reputation event.
28. (Original). The method of claim 27, wherein the reputation event comprises at least one of,
 designating the service provider as a preferred provider by a client,
 designating the service provider as an unacceptable provider by a client,
 requesting the service provider to perform a particular job,
 refusing to compensate the service provider for services performed, and
 failing to perform a service after accepting a job.
29. (Original). The method of claim 16, wherein the step of determining the reputation rating comprises:
 assigning a numeric value for an occurrence of a reputation event.
30. (Original). The method of claim 29, wherein the reputation event comprises at least one of,
 designating the service provider as a preferred provider by a client,
 designating the service provider as an unacceptable provider by a client,
 requesting the service provider to perform a particular job,
 refusing to compensate the service provider for services performed, and
 failing to perform a service after accepting a job.

31. (Original). A method for rating service providers, comprising:

receiving a numerical rating from a client for a service performed by a service provider;
determining an occurrence of a reputation event, wherein the reputation event is selected from the group comprising,
designating the service provider as a preferred provider by a client,
designating the service provider as an unacceptable provider by a client,
requesting the service provider to perform a particular job,
refusing to compensate the service provider for services performed, and
failing to perform a service after accepting a job,
assigning a numerical value for the occurrence of each of the reputation events,
calculating a reputation rating (RR) for the service provider based on the numerical rating and the numerical value.

32. (Original). The method of claim 31, wherein the calculating step is carried out using the following formula,

$$RR = K * [SNR / NNR] + (1 - K) * [N_1 * RE_1 + N_2 * RE_2 + \dots + N_n * RE_n] \text{ wherein,}$$

K is a constant between 0 and 1 inclusive,

SNR is a sum of all numerical ratings from clients regarding services performed by the service provider,

NNR is a total number of numerical ratings from clients regarding services performed by the service provider,

N_n is the number of occurrences of a given reputation event,

RE_n is the numerical value assigned for the occurrence of a given reputation event.

33. (Original). The method of claim 31, wherein the calculating step is carried out using the following formula,

$$RR = K * [SNR + N_1 * RE_1 + N_2 * RE_2 + \dots + N_n * RE_n] \text{ wherein,}$$

K is a constant

SNR is a sum of all numerical ratings from clients regarding services performed by the service provider,

Nn is the number of occurrences of a given reputation event,

REn is the numerical value assigned for the occurrence of a given reputation event.

34. (Original). The method of claim 31 wherein the calculating step is carried out for each of a plurality of service categories.

35. (Original). The method of claim 34, wherein the calculating step is carried out using the numerical values associated with services performed in more than one service category.

36. (Original). The method of claim 31, wherein the reputation event is selected from the group further comprising:

forwarding a job request to another person.

37. (Original). A method for rating a service provider, comprising:

determining a reputation rating for the service provider;

adjusting the reputation rating based on a quality assessment made by a client, and on an occurrence of a reputation event, wherein the reputation event is selected from the group comprising,

designating the service provider as a preferred provider by a client,

designating the service provider as an unacceptable provider by a client,

requesting the service provider to perform a particular job,

refusing to compensate the service provider for services performed, and

failing to perform a service after accepting a job.

38. (Original). The method of claim 37, wherein the calculating step is carried out for each of a plurality of service categories.

39. (Original). A method for facilitating the buying and selling of services, comprising:

- receiving a job request from a client, the job request comprising a description of a service to be performed and a deadline;
- receiving from the client a quota indicating a number of responses to be provided for the job request;
- selecting a group of service providers, wherein a number of service providers in the group is determined as a function of the number of service providers to whom the job request must be disclosed so that a number of responses received from the service providers equals the quota;
- disclosing the job request to the group;
- receiving a response to the job request from at least one service provider within the group;
- prior to the deadline, comparing a number of responses received and the quota;
- adjusting, based on the comparison of the number of responses received and the quota, the number of service providers in the group.

40. (Original). A method for facilitating the buying and selling of services, comprising:

- receiving a job request from a client, the job request comprising a description of a service to be performed and a deadline;
- receiving from the client a quota indicating a number of responses to be provided for the job request;
- determining a reputation rating for each of a plurality of service providers;
- selecting a first group of service providers from the plurality of service providers, wherein a mean reputation rating of the first group is higher than a mean reputation rating of the plurality of service providers;
- disclosing the job request to service providers within the first group;

receiving a response to the job request from at least one service provider within the first group;

prior to the deadline, comparing a number of responses received and the quota;

if the number of responses received is less than the quota, disclosing the job request to a second group of service providers, wherein a mean reputation rating of the second group is less than the mean reputation rating of the first group.

41. (Original). The method of claim 40, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing the job request to the second group, wherein the mean reputation rating of the second group is successively lowered, until either the number of responses received equals the quota or the deadline is reached.

42. (Original). The method of claim 40, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing the job request to the second group, wherein the mean reputation rating of the second group is successively lowered, until the number of responses received equals the quota.

43. (Original). The method of claim 40, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing the job request to the second group, wherein the mean reputation rating of the second group is successively lowered, until the deadline is reached.

44. (Original). The method of claim 40, wherein the first group of service providers is selected as a function of one or more factors comprising,

the quota,

an amount time between disclosing the job request and the deadline,

a time of day and a day of week of the disclosure of the job request to the first group of service providers,

a time of day and a day of week of the deadline,

a quantity of compensation to be paid to the service provider for each response received from the service provider, and

a quantity of service providers having each reputation rating.

45. (Original). The method of claim 40, wherein the determining step is carried out using a quality assessment made by a client.

46. (Original). The method of claim 45, wherein the determining step comprises:
assigning a numeric value for an occurrence of a reputation event.

47. (Original). The method of claim 46, wherein the reputation event comprises at least one of
designating the service provider as a preferred provider by a client,
designating the service provider as a unacceptable provider by a client,
requesting the service provider to perform a particular job,
refusing to compensate the service provider for services performed, and
failing to perform a service after accepting a job.

48. (Original). The method of claim 40, wherein the determining step comprises:
assigning a numeric value for an occurrence of a reputation event.

49. (Original). The method of claim 48, wherein the reputation event comprises at least one of
designating the service provider as a preferred provider by a client,
designating the service provider as a unacceptable provider by a client,
requesting the service provider to perform a particular job,
refusing to compensate the service provider for services performed, and
failing to perform a service after accepting a job.

50. (Original). The method of claim 40, wherein the job request relates to providing intellectual capital.

51. (Original). The method of claim 40, wherein the job request relates to providing marketing services.

52. (Original). The method of claim 40, wherein the disclosing steps are carried out using a computer network.

53. (Original). The method of claim 52, wherein the computer network is a public network.

54. (Original). The method of claim 53, wherein the computer network is a private network.

55. (Original). The method of claim 40, further comprising:

receiving a second job request from the client wherein the second job request identifies a service provider to perform the service;

disclosing the second job request to the identified service provider.

56. (Original). The method of claim 40, wherein the job request is not shown to a particular service provider as specified by the client.

57. (Original). The method of claim 40, further comprising:

assigning the job request to a category;

wherein the step of selecting the first group of service providers is carried out using a category reputation rating associated with the category, wherein the service providers have a plurality of category reputation ratings, and the category reputation ratings are determined based on services performed in each category.

58. (Original). The method of claim 40, wherein the job request further comprises a quantity of compensation to be paid to the service provider for each response received from the service provider.

59. (Original). The method of claim 40, further comprising:

suggesting a quantity of compensation to be paid to the service provider for each response responsive to the job request, the quota, and the reputation rating.

60. (Original). The method of claim 40, wherein the job request identifies a service provider to perform the service; and wherein the job request is disclosed to the service provider.

61. (Original). The method of claim 40, wherein a service provider within the first group of service providers forwards the job request to another person.

62. (Original). A method for facilitating the buying and selling of services, comprising:

receiving a plurality of job requests from a plurality of clients, each job request comprising a description of a service to be performed and a deadline;

receiving from each client a quota indicating a number of responses to be provided for the job request;

determining a reputation rating for each of a plurality of service providers;

for each job request, selecting a first group of service providers from the plurality of service providers, wherein a mean reputation rating of the first group is higher than a mean reputation rating of the plurality of service providers;

disclosing capsules describing the job request to the service providers within the first group, whereby service providers may accept the capsule, indicating an intention to provide a response to the job request;

receiving capsule deliveries comprising responses to the job request from the service providers who accepted the capsules;

prior to the deadline, comparing a number of capsules delivered and the quota;

if the number of capsules delivered is less than the quota, disclosing capsules describing the job request to a second group of service providers, wherein a mean reputation rating of the second group is less than the mean reputation rating of the first group.

63. (Original). The method of claim 62, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing capsules describing the job request to the second group, wherein the mean reputation rating of the second group is successively lowered, until either the number of capsules delivered equals the quota or the deadline is reached.

64. (Original). The method of claim 62, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing capsules describing the job request to the second group, wherein the mean reputation rating of the second group is successively lowered, until the number of capsules delivered equals the quota.

65. (Original). The method of claim 62, further comprising:

repeating the step of disclosing capsules describing the job request to the second group, wherein the mean reputation rating of the second group is successively lowered, until the deadline is reached.

66. (Original). The method of claim 62, further comprising:

disclosing, with the capsule, a due-time to the service providers, indicating a time at which the capsule must be delivered, the due-time is at the same time or prior to the deadline.

67. (Original). The method of claim 62, wherein the comparing step is modified by adding the number of accepted but not yet delivered capsules to the number of capsules delivered, so long as the due-time has not passed for the accepted but not yet delivered capsules.

68. (Original). The method of claim 62 wherein the service provider may accept a plurality of capsules from a plurality of job requests.

69. (Original). The method of claim 68, wherein the service provider may not accept a capsule when a number of job requests for which capsules have been accepted but not yet delivered by the service provider exceeds a predetermined capsule limit number.

70. (Original). The method of claim 69, wherein the predetermined capsule limit number is a fixed number for all service providers.

71. (Original). The method of claim 69, wherein the predetermined capsule limit number is a function of a total number of capsules disclosed but not accepted.

repeating the step of disclosing capsules describing the job request to the second group, wherein the mean reputation rating of the second group is successively lowered, until either the number of capsules delivered equals the quota or the deadline is reached.

72. (Original). The method of claim 69, wherein the predetermined capsule limit number is a function of the average time lapse between capsule acceptance and capsule delivery for the service provider.

73. (Original). The method of claim 62, further comprising:

receiving a job request modification from a client;

canceling unaccepted capsules;

disclosing modified capsules describing the modified job request to the service providers to whom the capsules were disclosed.

74. (Cancelled).